

#####

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 10, 2011

#####

High School Graduating Class of 2016 will be Required to take more English / Social Studies

Vancouver, WA – On November 10, after three years of extensive outreach and feedback, the Washington State Board of Education approved multiple changes to the state's high school graduation requirements.

Among the revisions, graduates in the class of 2016 (or 2018 with an approved, local district extension application) will now have to complete one more year of English (1 credit) and an additional half credit of social studies.

Based on extensive feedback received by the Board, both during the November 9-10 meeting and in the months prior, the graduation requirements were modified to allow school districts to receive a two-year extension from the social studies and English credit requirements. This extension period provides school districts additional time to plan for and implement the required changes.

The additional credits bring Washington more in line with the high school graduation requirements of other states. Prior to the rule revision, 45 states required more English and 39 states required more social studies than what was asked of Washington students. Washington State currently requires 3 credits of English and 2.5 credits of social studies for high school graduates.

"Today's vote is the culmination of years of diligent and thoughtful work," said Board Chair Jeff Vincent. "We are confident that these new requirements will result in more students graduating better prepared for the challenges ahead."

Several of the rule changes will free up time in student's schedules for additional help or coursework as needed. Per the adopted rule revisions, students can now take Washington State history in middle school and have it count towards graduation as a non-credit requirement. Depending on district resources, students might also have the opportunity to take a Career and Technical Education (CTE) course and have it satisfy two requirements. This "two for one" policy, for example, would allow students to take a CTE graphic arts course and concurrently meet the requirement for a fine arts course. Students taking advantage of this program will have an additional credit available in their schedule, to be used as needed in order to meet graduation requirements and/or to prepare for their postsecondary goals.

"Providing increased local flexibility will positively impact our students," said Mr. Vincent. "Local districts will now have more opportunities to help their students get the courses they need, earn credits, and then graduate."

The newly required credit of English and half credit of social studies won't be a change to most districts. However, 28 districts will need to add .5 credit of social studies; 32 districts will need to add .5 to 1 credit of English, and 12 districts will need to add credits in both subjects.

The changes represent the first step in the development of a career and college ready graduation requirements framework. The State Board has signaled the possibility of adding more credit opportunities in the future, but has agreed to put this on hold until state funds are available.

More information is available at www.sbe.wa.gov.

Contact:

Aaron Wyatt
Communications and Legislative Director
Washington State Board of Education
(360) 430-1656

#####

About the State Board of Education: The State Board of Education provides advocacy and strategic oversight of public education. The Board is comprised of 16 members: five are elected by school board directors, seven are appointed by the Governor, two serve as student representatives, and one serves as a private school representative. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is also a member. The Board's recent work includes the approval of a new career and college-ready graduation requirements framework and developing the first Washington State intervention policy into our persistently lowest-achieving schools.